



SEEK THE LORD

ARCHBISHOP DENNIS M. SCHNURR

Since the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shutdown of many businesses, we have often heard the term “essential workers.” But as I pointed out in my recent pastoral letter, *Radiate Christ*, everyone is essential. Each of us has a role to play in the Church and in civil society because God works through human hands.

In the past six months our country has been rocked by the pandemic, by the disruption to lives and jobs from the resulting lockdown, and by the social upheaval that followed the senseless and brutal killing of George Floyd. It is understandable that in the face of such daunting challenges, we turn to government and other human institutions for solutions. At the same time, however, we are each called to be part of the answer by our own individual actions.

Laws, rules and policies by themselves will never obliterate the sin of racism, for example, because human beings can break laws, ignore rules and flout policies. In a letter announcing the “Holy Hour for Conversion” held at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains on June 3, I called for the necessary conversion of hearts that will compel change and ultimately reform our institutions and society. For by changing ourselves, we can help to change the world.

To that end, a key element of the holy hour was a very moving examination of conscience led by Deacon Royce Winters, director of the Office for African American Pastoral Ministries. This reflection helped participants confront their own responsibility to radiate the love of Christ to all people and be witnesses to His kingdom on earth, particularly in the area of racial justice.

Racial disharmony is only one aspect of the deep division we see all around us, however. Even the war against COVID-19 has not brought our country together. Instead, it has fostered more division as both government

actions and personal behaviors have become flashpoints for controversy. On this issue, as with so many others today, respectful exchanges of opinion are rare, while mean-spirited judgmentalism is all too common.

This disharmony is a problem for which there is no simple government fix. It can only be solved by conversion of hearts, with God’s help, through prayer. That is why the Pastoral Center of the archdiocese has launched the Pray a Minute campaign to encourage prayer for the intention of peace, justice and goodwill in our archdiocese and in our country.

The ambitious goal of the Pray a Minute project is one million hours of prayer specifically for this intention for our country by January 1, 2021, the Catholic Church’s World Day of Prayer for Peace. That target number reflects in a very practical way both the importance of the individual person and the power of prayer. The sum is large, and yet it would only take one extra minute of prayer per day by every Catholic in the archdiocese to reach the hoped-for total. Of course, you may feel called to do more.

Although the Pray a Minute initiative is already underway, do not feel that it is too late if you have not yet joined. Additional prayer at any time will help to change you and change the world. Go to PrayAMinute.com now, if you have not already done so, to make a prayer pledge. You will also find resources there that may inspire you to try new forms of prayer.

To paraphrase the Christian writer C.S. Lewis, the purpose of prayer is not to change God, but to change ourselves. In other words, prayer is not magical thinking. It is the pathway to a deeper, life-altering personal relationship with Jesus so that we can radiate Christ and thereby be instruments of the peace, justice and goodwill that we seek. For that, we are all essential workers.